

The Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner's response to the publication of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary's (HMICFRS) - Getting the balance right? An inspection of how effectively the police deal with protests (Mar 2021).

[The report can be found here](#)

On 21 September 2020, the Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to conduct an inspection into how effectively the police manage protests. This followed several protests, by groups including Extinction Rebellion, Black Lives Matter and many others.

In recent years, increasing amounts of police time and resources have been spent dealing with protests. In April and October 2019, Extinction Rebellion brought some of London's busiest areas to a standstill for several days. The policing operation for the two extended protests cost £37m, more than twice the annual budget of London's violent crime taskforce.

Protests are an important part of our vibrant and tolerant democracy. Under human rights law, we all have the right to gather and express our views. But these rights are not absolute rights. That fact raises important questions for the police and wider society to consider about how much disruption is tolerable, and how to deal with protesters who break the law. A fair balance should be struck between individual rights and the general interests of the community.

HMICFRS inspected ten police forces with recent experience of policing protests and consulted a wide range of other bodies, including protest groups and – through a survey of over 2000 people – the general public. Nottinghamshire Police was not inspected.

Having reviewed the evidence, HMICFRS concluded that the police do not strike the right balance on every occasion i.e. the balance may tip too readily in favour of protesters when – as is often the case – the police do not accurately assess the level of disruption caused, or likely to be caused, by a protest. Consequently, four areas for improvement were identified and 12 recommendations made 2 of which were directed to all chief constables to ensure that they obtain appropriate legal advice and have in place debrief governance arrangements.

The Force will continue to use its dedicated 4ACTION database for tracking and responding to all HMICFRS recommendations and areas for improvement overseen by the Deputy Chief

Constable. The Force also provides regular HMICFRS update reports to my Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel (JASP) who provide additional scrutiny in these important areas.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paddy Tipping'.

Paddy Tipping
Police and Crime Commissioner